



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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2009 trade mission to Hong Kong opens door for Washington foods

OLYMPIA – Chocolate-covered fruits, natural baking products, Northwest wines and dozens of other products from Washington and Oregon enjoyed three weeks in the spotlight as part of a July Pacific Northwest Festival in-store promotion at one of Hong Kong's largest retail grocery chains.

Last fall, Washington State Department of Agriculture Director Dan Newhouse and Oregon Department of Agriculture Director Katy Coba led a joint trade mission to Asia that included a stop in Hong Kong. A visit with an executive chef for Park n' Shop, who had an affinity for Pacific Northwest foods, led to the promotion of products at the Hong Kong retailer's 250 stores.

"Growers and food processing businesses in both states recognize the importance of the Hong Kong market and its status as a gateway to the rest of China," said Newhouse. "This promotion resulted in new sales and provided some critical feedback to participating companies on how to best reach Hong Kong food and beverage consumers."

News media in Hong Kong made sure the Park n' Shop promotion of Pacific Northwest products came with a big splash. Extensive press coverage of the key Washington products, combined with direct mail materials to consumers, garnered attention. Once the consumer came to the store, product sampling and in-store cooking demonstrations featuring the products created an even bigger buzz.

"Initial sales results are very promising," said Charles Witzleben, president of SuperValu International, a major wholesaler and grocery retailer based in Tacoma that participated in the promotion. "Park n' Shop intends to add a number of the new items to their everyday range for ongoing sales."

Gov. Chris Gregoire has charged state government with boosting exports of Washington products by \$600 million over the next five years. One in three jobs in Washington is either directly or indirectly tied to trade.

Hong Kong abolished all import duty and taxes on wine in 2008, making it an even more desirable export market for Northwest wines. Earlier this year, Newhouse and Coba signed an agreement that will lead to further promotion of Northwest wines in Hong Kong.

"There is value in taking a regional approach in partnership with Oregon," said Newhouse. "Our two states grow many of the same commodities. Quite often, we can do more together for producers and companies in our two states than we can do alone."

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